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RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2017

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: GOT FRUSTRATED BY YEREVAN'S SUPPORT FOR
AGR

REF: ISTANBUL 929

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) MFA U/S Apakan told the Ambassador on October 18 that GOT officials are deeply frustrated by what they describe as contentment on the part of Armenian officials regarding the progress of AGR in the U.S. House of Representatives. The GOAM is "totally wrong" to believe that it can force Turkey into making concessions on opening the border and normalizing relations through the active pursuit of genocide recognition in France, the United States, or other foreign parliaments. MFA DG for Central Asian and Caucasus Affairs Uman said that, because of the GOAM's attitude, the GOT is presently unable to make an opening toward Armenia.

12. (S) Apakan advised the Ambassador that General (Ret'd) Scowcroft and former Ambassador Holmes suggested to him October 17 that the GOT prepare a non-paper documenting Turkey's recent efforts to promote normalized relations with Armenia. Apakan complained that, as recently as August, Ankara expressed to Yerevan its willingness to put all issues on the table, including the border. The Armenians said that they would not be ready to talk until September, and then never responded at all. Meeting with Armenian FM Oskanian on October 2 in New York, FM Babacan made the same offer, and proposed that GOAM Deputy FM Kirakossian and GOT MFA Deputy U/S Cevikoz meet to discuss the Turkish proposal. Oskanian's answer was that if two Ministers can't resolve an issue, neither can two deputies. This demonstrated to the Turks the priority of genocide recognition over normalized relations with Turkey in Armenia's foreign policy.

13. (C) The Turks believe Yerevan has been instrumental in advancing AGR through the Congress. Apakan said that Speaker Pelosi assured Turkish Ambassador Sensoy that AGR was a purely domestic matter. Yet Uman recounted that FM Oskanian told FM Babacan that, if Turkey would give tangible assurances that it would open the border and establish diplomatic relations, "we will turn off the resolution." Apakan emphasized that Turkey cannot accept blackmail. The GOT also believes that Oskanian's September 27 letter to Speaker Pelosi dismissing any seriousness on the part of Turkey to normalize its relationship with Armenia was instrumental in helping to advance the AGR measure through the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Apakan further complained that the GOAM has sought to derail Turkey's bid for EU membership. The Turks are incredulous over Oskanian's October 15 speech to the European Parliament, where he claimed that Turkey's genocide denial constitutes a security threat to Armenia. Apakan stressed that Armenia is not an enemy, but efforts to create pre-conditions that obstruct Turkey's EU accession antagonize Turkey deeply.

14. (C) The Ambassador urged that Turkey keep the USG well-informed of Turkish efforts to pursue dialogue with Armenia. He stressed GOAM distrust of Turkey and its reluctance to go down a road that would put off the AGR, a key Armenian and Diaspora foreign policy objective, only to get nowhere toward normalization with Turkey. Yerevan, he said, wants a transformed relationship with Turkey. While the politics of this issue are certainly bad in Turkey, they are hardly more favorable in Armenia, with a presidential election upcoming. He appealed to U/S Apakan to take full advantage of any window of opportunity that the AGR's delay may provide and pledged continued U.S. support for these efforts.

15. (C) COMMENT. The GOT is wrong to see a long arm of Yerevan calling the shots on AGR, though that view seems to be widely shared within government and parliament. Nevertheless, the vocal support of the Armenian leadership for genocide recognition in Washington and elsewhere deeply antagonizes Turks, and could provoke Turkey into retaliating, not only against the United States, but also against Armenia and Armenian citizens residing in Turkey (reftel). It could also make impossible any meaningful gesture toward Armenia, even if the AGR fails to pass. END COMMENT.

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